The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity
Vol 20
Pre release cover

AUGUST 5TH...
THE DAY OF OUR FIRST ANNIVERSARY.
WE AGREED TO TALK ON THE PHONE TONIGHT!
Tee hee hee!
And he was the one asking, too!
AT FIRST, EVERYTHING SEEMED NORMAL.
BUT WHEN HE TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BAKERY EARLIER TODAY, SOMETHING CHANGED.
...HM?
RINTARO-KUN SEEMS A BIT... DOWN FOR SOME REASON?!

Chapter 150: Girlfriend

...!

IS IT JUST ME...

OR ARE YOU NOT ALL THAT EXCITED ABOUT IT, RINTARO-KUN?

N-NO, I'M SUPER PUMPED, DUH!

WELL YOU DON'T SOUND THE WAY AT ALL!

I WANT TO BE SOMEONE WHO CAN FACE IT ALL HEAD-ON

ALL THIS KINDNESS AND DISCONTENT I'VE BEEN GIVEN AND EXPERIENCED...

I WANT TO WORK HERE.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

THAT'S WHY... I DECIDED THAT I'D LIKE TO WORK HERE.

I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE ON AND FORGET ABOUT IT.

THIS SENSE OF DEFEAT I FELT AFTER TRYING YOUR CAKES...

...AND MAKE THE MOST DELICIOUS CAKES.

I'LL BE ABLE TO SURPASS BOTH YOU AND MY FATHER...

SO THAT, ONE DAY...

YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WIN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEST! EASY, RIGHT?

I WANT TO BECOME THE SORT OF PÂTISSIER...

OF COURSE.

CAN YOU DO IT?

...WHOSE CAKES CAN HELP BRIGHTEN A CUSTOMER'S DAY, IF EVEN JUST A LITTLE!

WH-WHAT'S WRONG? IS THERE... A PROBLEM WITH HELPING OUT?

I MEAN, YOU GET TO WORK FOR THE PERSON YOU'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED, RIGHT...?

UGH...

I CAN'T HEAR YOU, RINTARO-KUN!

ぎゅむ SQUISH

I JUST... I MESSED UP SO MUCH...!

I'VE... NEVER HEARD HIM RAMBLE ON FOR SO LONG.

Aaaaah, stupid!

Feels almost refreshing...

BUT IT'S HOW I'VE ALWAYS BEEN! WHENEVER I GET TOO EMOTIONAL ABOUT SOMETHING, I JUST CAN'T KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT!

AND BEFORE I EVEN TOLD HIM MY NAME, I SAID SOMETHING SO STUPID THAT I WAS GONNA SURPASS HIM!

I RAN MY MOUTH ABOUT WANTING TO WORK THERE... WITHOUT EVEN LOOKING INTO HOW MUCH OF AN AMAZING PÂTISSIER HE REALLY WAS...!

Reflection Time

...!

THAT... IS TRUE.

BUT... THE ADMI-RATION YOU FEEL TOWARD HIM IS REAL, RIGHT?

AND THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED...

...ONLY MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE YOU WENT FOR IT, NO?

IT'S IMPRESSIVE HOW THAT WORKED OUT SO BEAUTIFULLY DESPITE YOU JUST BARGING IN THERE...

I ALREADY TOLD MY PARENTS ABOUT THIS, TOO.

...IS WHAT MOM SAID.

...

I DO THAT ALL THE TIME MYSELF, AFTER ALL!

WELL... I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR FEELING ANXIOUS ABOUT ALL OF THE MISTAKES YOU MADE.

THAT'S...

WELL, NOT THE ONLY THING...

?

RINTARO-KUN?

WHY DON'T YOU WORK HERE FOR AN INTERNSHIP OF SORTS DURING THAT TIME FRAME?

YOU KIDS HAVE YOUR SUMMER BREAK RIGHT NOW, YES?

HOW ABOUT WE DO SOME-THING LIKE THIS?

NATU-RALLY.

AND SO...

CAN I REALLY?!

...!!

IT WILL BE OUR STAFF...

...WHO GET TO DECIDE IF YOU'RE ALLOWED TO WORK WITH US.

!

I HOPE YOU UNDER-STAND.

AFTER ALL, I WON'T BE THE ONLY ONE YOU'LL BE WORKING WITH.

THEY WILL BE JUDGING YOU...

AS YOU WORK WITH THEM IN THE KITCHEN...

...AND SEE IF THEY CAN ENTRUST THEIR BACKS TO YOU OR NOT.

I HAVE THIS FEELING RIGHT NOW...

THAT I HAVEN'T REALLY EXPERIENCED BEFORE.

...?

IT'S JUST...

YOU STILL THERE?

Pâtisserie Noisette

WE'RE ALL COLLEAGUES AT BEST, AND I'M THE STRANGER.

BUT THAT PLACE...IS DIFFEFRENT.

Patisserie Plain

...I'M STILL THE OWNER'S SON, RIGHT?

THE STAFF AT MY FAMILY'S PÂTISSERIE KNEW ME...

AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH I'D MESS UP OR FALL BEHIND...

I CAN'T HELP BUT WORRY... HOW THEY'LL SEE ME.

...AND WORK LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE...

IF I WERE TO JUST BARGE MY WAY IN THERE...

I THINK...

...I'M SCARED.

...

S-SORRY ABOUT THAT!

TODAY'S SUPPO-SED TO BE OUR FIRST ANNIVERSARY, YET I KEEP WHINING...

IT'S FINE, REALLY!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

GASP

...!

...

...I'M HAPPY THAT I GET TO HEAR YOU LIKE THIS.

AND TO BE HONEST...

AND SINCE YOU'RE ALWAYS THE ONE WHO HAS TO CHEER ME UP...

IT FEELS LIKE IT'S FINALLY MY TIME TO SHINE!

...WHY?

ISN'T THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU'RE ACTUALLY SHAKEN UP THIS MUCH?

WHEN YOU WERE UNSURE HOW TO HANDLE YORITA-KUN'S SITUATION, YOU PICKED YOURSELF UP RIGHT AFTER, DIDN'T YOU?

...YOU CAN BE WEAK AROUND!

JUST LIKE YOU ARE FOR ME, I WANT TO BE SOMEONE...

...!

AND IN A WAY, THIS IS THE BEST PRESENT FOR OUR ANNIVERSARY THAT I COULD HOPE FOR!

BEING SCARED LIKE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW...

BUT YOU HAVE TO LET IT OUT AND NOT BOTTLE IT ALL UP INSIDE OF YOU.

THAT'S NOT A BAD THING AT ALL.

AND TO BE HONEST...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.

...ISN'T A BAD THING AT ALL.

FEELING SCARED OF SOMETHING...

TO THINK THOSE WORDS WOULD COME BACK TO BITE ME LIKE THIS...!

Gaaah!

I was really happy when you said that, you know!

YOU SAID THE SAME THING A WHILE AGO WHEN YOU CHEERED ME UP, REMEMBER?

HOLD ON A SECOND, I FEEL LIKE I'VE HEARD THESE WORDS BEFORE...

AH, WAS IT THAT OBVIOUS?

...

I DON'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HOW BAKERIES WORK...

OR WHAT REALLY MATTERS WHEN YOU'RE WORKING AT ONE, TO BE HONEST.

YOU CAN'T EVER FULLY CONTROL THE WAY PEOPLE SEE YOU OR WHAT THEY VALUE ABOUT YOU.

BUT I DO FEEL LIKE...

IS CREATE BURDEN FOR YOU.

ALL I DO

I'M NOT KIND.

I'M ACTUALLY...

I DON'T THINK...

NOT BRAVE OR STRONG.

I CAN BECOME LIKE THAT.

AND SO, IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL TO BE SCARED.

THAT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU CAN'T CHANGE.

THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLESOME TIMES AHEAD.

...

I WANT YOU TO KEEP GOING AND PUSHING FORWARD SO THAT YOU WON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS.

BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...

...

BECAUSE, IF YOU DO THAT, THEY'LL SURELY REALIZE HOW SINCERE YOU ARE.

THROUGH EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE SO FAR...

YOU'VE GAINED EVERYONE'S TRUST, AFTER ALL.

PLEASE...

THIS IS...

...NOW I SEE HOW.

YOU'VE GOT GREAT TASTE.

I DECIDED TO COME TODAY

IT'S PLAIN AS DAY TO ME THAT EVERYONE TRUSTS YOU SO MUCH.

...

HEY, RINTARO-KUN?

...AS YOUR BOYFRIEND.

BUT, WELL, ME SAYING ALL OF THIS DOESN'T EXACTLY HELP YOU, HUH?

IT'S FINE. I APPRE-CIATE IT!

...YOUR GIRLFRIEND, YOU KNOW?

I AM...

...FOR ME TO SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR FUTURE, RINTARO-KUN.

IT'S FINALLY TIME...

I'LL BE THE ONE CHEERING FOR YOU THE LOUDEST.

WHEN-EVER YOU NEED IT...

YOU CAN JUST RELY ON ME.

OR LIKE YOU CAN'T KEEP GOING ANYMORE...

SO, IF YOU EVER FEEL TIRED...

AND IF YOU WANT...

...I'LL GIVE YOU A HUG...

...ANY DAY, ANY MINUTE!

I STILL THINK ABOUT

Showering you with affection!

AND I'LL PAT YOU ON THE HEAD AS A NEAT BONUS,

—Ah

THANK YOU, REALLY.

7
8
Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
1
2
7
Internship
8
9
14
15
16
21
22

...

ALL RIGHT, LISTEN UP.

tisserie Moisette

THIS HERE IS RINTARO TSUMUGI-KUN.

WE'LL HAVE AN INTERN JOIN US FOR THE TIME BEING.

AS I'VE EXPLAINED THE OTHER DAY...

MY NAME IS RINTARO TSUMUGI.

I HOPE WE GET ALONG!

LIKEWISE!

ALL RIGHT, THEN LET'S START PREPARING SO WE CAN OPEN SOON.

WE MIGHT HAVE A NEWCOMER WITH US...

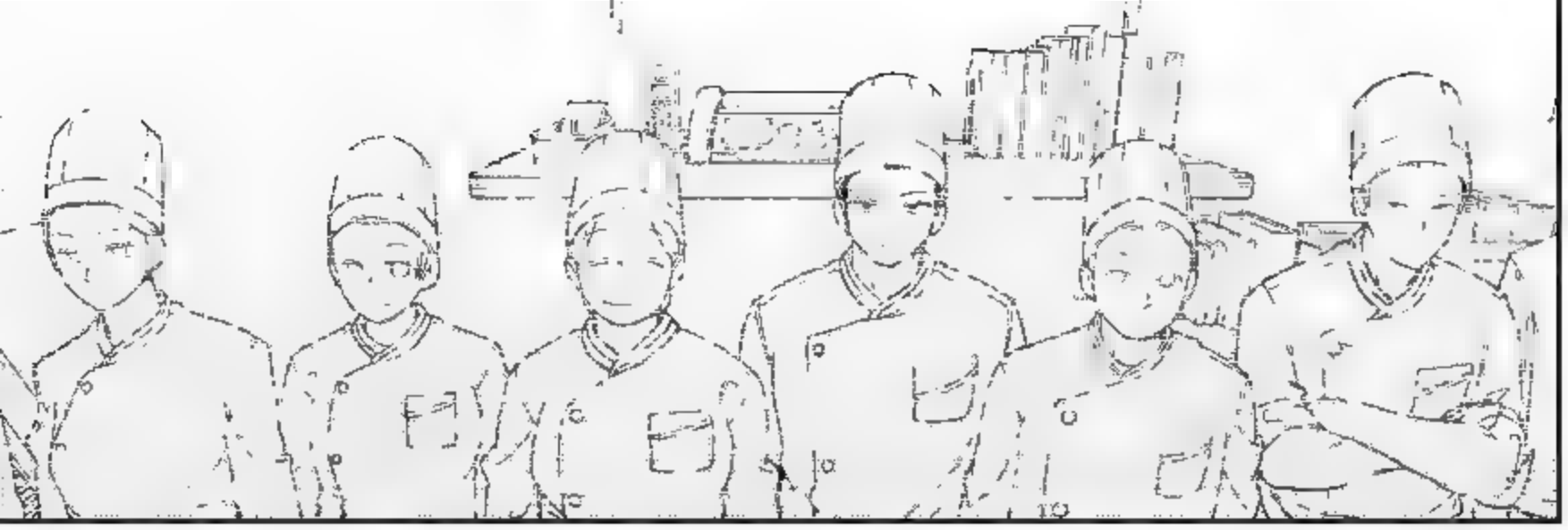
BUT THE WORKFLOW REMAINS THE SAME, YEAH?

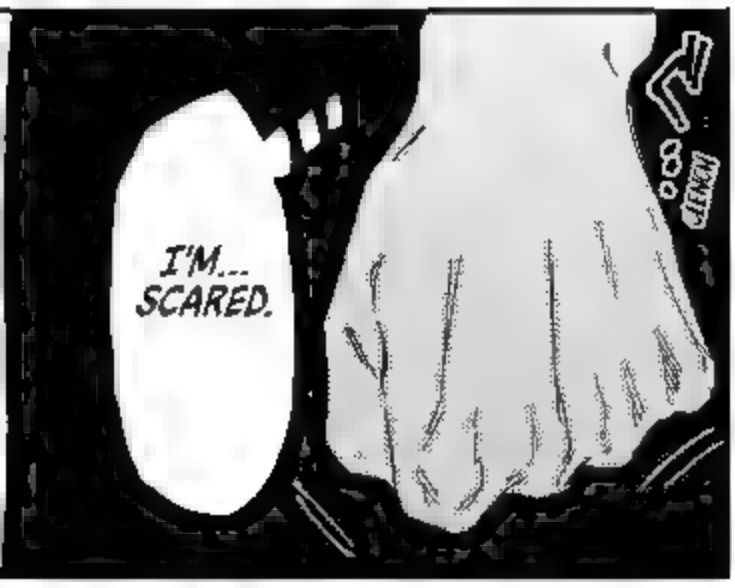
LET'S GIVE IT OUR ALL AGAIN...

SO THAT OUR CUSTOMERS LEAVE OUR STORE WITH A SMILE!

OF COURSE!

...




I'M... SCARED.
KENJI

...IS REACHING UP ALL THE WAY TO MY EARS.
BA DUMP
BA DUMP
THE SOUND OF MY HEART-BEAT...

...I'LL GIVE YOU A HUG...
...ANY DAY ANY MINUTE!
I WANT YOU TO KEEP GOING AND PUSHING FORWARD SO THAT YOU WON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS.
BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...
BECAUSE, IF YOU DO THAT, THEY'LL SURELY REALIZE HOW SINCERE YOU ARE.

...SO THAT I WON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS.
I'M GOING TO GIVE IT MY ALL...
BUT...

...Phew.

IT'S RATHER HOT OUT TODAY, SO BE CAREFUL, OKAY?

MAKE SURE TO DRINK PLENTY OF WATER.

ALL RIGHT, OFF YOU GO!

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR EXAMS!

OH, ALSO! I GAVE KAORUKO YOUR SHARE OF MEAT-WRAPPED ONIGIRI, SUBARU-CHAN.

REALLY?!

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

SO THAT YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO DURING YOUR LUNCH BREAK.

SEE YOU LATER!

Chapter 151: To the National Mock Exams

I'M SO GLAD WE'RE BOTH AT THE SAME VENUE!

GATAK

GATAK

THOUGH I CAN'T HELP FEELING NERVOUS.

OF COURSE WE WILL...

LET'S ROCK THESE EXAMS, SUBARU!

I'd rather just relax a bit

Hm

We could review some stuff before we gotta change trains?

MAKES SENSE. IT MUST BE STRESSFUL FOR HIM AS WELL.

And I'm busy.

WE HAVEN'T REALLY TALKED MUCH LATELY, SO I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE WHAT'S GOING ON, THOUGH...

SHOULD BE, YEAH.

ANYWAY, TSUMUGI-KUN'S WORKING AT THAT BAKERY NOW, RIGHT?

WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW HARD HE'S WORKING RIGHT ABOUT NOW...

FOR SURE. BUT...

I FEEL LIKE...

...I CAN GIVE IT MY ALL, TOO.

PUFFY ぼく

HE DOESN'T GET TO SEE KAORUKO LIKE THIS, RIGHT?

I'LL HAVE TO MONOPOLIZE ON IT AS LONG AS I CAN...!

ぼく PUFFY

IN THIS HEAT?!

BOYS... REALLY ARE SOMETHING ELSE.

He sent me a few pictures, too!

HE AND THE OTHER GUYS WENT TO A SPORTS PARK THE OTHER DAY!

OH, SPEAKING OF!

!

That's... impressive.

Like this... and this...

AH...

NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

...IF HE ALREADY DECIDED WHICH UNIVERSITY HE'LL APPLY FOR.

HUH?

WH- WHICH UNIVERSITY...

DO YOU PLAN ON ATTENDING AFTER GRADUATING?!

BUT IT'S FINE I... FIND MY WAY EVENTUALLY

THANKS I APPRECIATE IT

I GUESS I JUST ASSUMED THAT YOU'D BE GOING THERE NOW... I'M SORRY

WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU MADE UP WITH HIDAKA-KUN.

EVEN WHILE TRYING OUT THEIR ACK EXAMS, RIGHT?

YOU WEREN'T SURE ABOUT T-UNIVERSITY

THAT MAKES SENSE.

I WONDER...

...WHEN I CAUSED HIM TO REACT THAT WAY.

RE-APPOINTED.

WAS A BIT.

MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE, AFTER ALL.

HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE...

IT'S BEEN ROUGHLY A MONTH...

SINCE THAT DAY AT THE BEACH...

AND THE GROUP CHAT'S BEEN MOSTLY SILENT, TOO.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING RIGHT NOW.

SINCE WE'RE ALL BUSY...

WE HAVEN'T MET SINCE, EITHER.

AND,

ONCE WE MEET AGAIN...

I HAVE TO BE...

MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT HOW I ACT AROUND HIM.

Sign: Kenkyo University

!

BUT WE'LL HAVE TO GET USED TO IT EVENTUALLY...

OH, I TOTALLY GET THAT!

THE CLOSER WE'RE GETTING... THE MORE TENSE I FEEL.

WHAT?

HOLD ON...

IS THAT NATSU-SAWA-KUN?

WAGURI-SAN...

AND HOSHINA-SAN...

SURE HAS, EH?

IT'S BEEN SO LONG, NATSUSAWA-KUN.

SAME HERE! WHAT A COINCI-DENCE!

WOW, I SURE DIDN'T EXPECT TO RUN INTO YOU TWO HERE.

Y-YES!

H-HAVE YOU BEEN WELL?

KEEP IT CASUAL! KEEP IT CASUAL!

CAN'T COMPLAIN.

HI THERE, HOSHINA-SAN. BEEN A MINUTE, YEAH?

T-TWITCH-ING?!

BUT... ARE YOU ALL NERVOUS AGAIN BECAUSE OF THE EXAMS?

YOUR FACE IS TWITCHING A WHOLE LOT.

E-EXCUSE YOU?!

AND, WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU'RE NOT NERVOUS WHATSOEVER?!

DO I LOOK LIKE THE SORTA GUY WHO'D BE?

GRRR...!

BUT, WELL...

I GUESS I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED. YOU'RE ALSO HERE TO TAKE THE MOCK EXAMS, RIGHT?

AH, YEAH. ABOUT THAT...

AH, HELLO...

PARTIALLY 'CAUSE MY FRIEND OVER HERE INVITED ME.

D-DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! I WAS JUST A BIT SURPRISED, IS ALL...

My name is Subaru Hoshina.

GASP

UM, WELL, THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME OUT THAT ONE TIME!

BOW

BOW

WHY ARE THEY BOTH STIFF AS A BOARD?

Excuse me?

SORRY F SUDDE CALLI OUT TO MY NA IS HIDA

I'M FRIENDS WITH THIS GUY CALLED NATSUSAWA, AND..

HIDAKA-KUN!

...!!

I DO, YEAH!

!

BUT WENT WITH CHIDORI LAST MINUTE

I ORIGINALLY PLANNED ON ATTENDING ANOTHER SCHOOL.

BUT WE GOT IN A FIGHT AND GREW MORE DISTANT AFTER

DAZED

NOT SURE IF YOU REMEMBER...

BUT WHEN WE MET UP WITH YOUR FRIENDS FROM KIKYO AND WENT TO THE BARBEQUE TOGETHER, I TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS ONE FRIEND OF MINE FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL, RIGHT?

I had no idea she knew boys beside you guys.

HOW COME THEY'VE MET BEFORE?

IS HE FROM... CHIDORI?

RIGHT, I NEVER TOLD YOU BEFORE.

He's not from Chiaori, so no worries

DOES THAT MEAN... YOU TWO GUYS MADE UP?

...MIRACULOUSLY, YEAH.

SO, AFTER A FEW THINGS HAPPENING, THEY GOT ACQUAINTED WITH EACH OTHER.

BY SHEER COINCIDENCE, I RAN INTO HIM WHEN WE WENT TO THE MOCK EXAMS FOR T-UNIVERSITY.

HOSHINA-SAN WAS WITH ME TOO THEN, RIGHT?

HEH, THANKS.

THAT'S GREAT! I'M HAPPY FOR YOU!

!

SINCE WE'RE TRYING TO GET INTO THE SAME UNIVERSITY.

WE'VE BEEN MEETING UP HERE AND THERE TO STUDY TOGETHER.

Glad to see they're getting along.

ANYWAY, HIDAKA! THIS HERE'S A FRIEND OF OURS. HER NAME'S WAGURI-SAN.

NICE TO MEET YOU!

I'm Kaoruko Waguri.

L-LIKEWISE. MY NAME IS REO HIDAKA.

DO YOU MEAN...

THE SAME... UNIVER-SITY?

I DECI-DED...

I'D TRY TO GET INTO T-UNIVER-SITY.

After, all that, huh?

...YEAH.

...WHILE EVERYONE ELSE IS TRYING SO HARD, RIGHT?

I COULDN'T EXACTLY TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT...

WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU MADE UP WITH HIDAKA-KUN...
I GUESS I JUST ASSUMED THAT YOU'D BE GOING THERE NOW... I'M SORRY.
NO. IT'S FINE.
I SEE.
SO WE'RE NOT.
WALKING DOWN THE SAME PATH, AFTER ALL...
I SEE! WHAT MAJOR DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?
...
I'M THINKING OF BECOMING A TEACHER, SO... IT'D HAVE TO BE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, YEAH.
AND THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT HIDAKA'S GOT THE SAME PLAN IN MIND.
RIGHT ON.
W-WAIT...A TEACHER?!
GRANTED, IT WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE T-UNIVERSITY IF I JUST WANTED TO BE A TEACHER, BUT...
AND I WANT TO KEEP WALKING SIDE BY SIDE
WITH YOU ALL
FROM NOW ON AND ALWAYS
I GUESS I FOUND A GOAL FOR MYSELF NOW.
MUST SOUND CRAZY COMING FROM ME, HUH?
YOU'RE REALLY GONNA SAY THAT YOURSELF?
NOT AT ALL!
WHEN WE ALL MET UP TO STUDY AT USAMI-KUN'S PLACE...
I WAS REALLY SURPRISED TO SEE HOW MUCH BETTER YOU'D GOTTEN AT TEACHING OTHERS.
WELL... I CAN'T DENY THAT I'VE BEEN A BIT OF A WRECK BEFORE.

...!!

ISN'T THIS GREAT, SU—

THIS GUY'S PRETTY GOOD AT TEACHING OTHERS, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW.

IF YOU'D LIKE, I COULD ALSO TEACH YOU.

THEN LET'S ALL MEET UP AGAIN SOMETIME.

!

I SEE...

...YOU WANT TO DO.

SO YOU FOUND SOME-THING...

I GUESS...

WE'RE BOTH GOING TO BE BUSY THEN?

ANYWAY, WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE HEADING OFF.

THAT'S TRUE! GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR EXAMS!

...SEEMS LIKE IT.

PHEW

DID NOT THINK I'D RUN INTO HER TODAY.

PUH

KAO-RUKO...

!

WE SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD OFF OUR-SELVES...

...I HAVEN'T QUITE FELT GROUNDED.

YOU KNOW...

EVER SINCE I BEGAN TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO WHAT THE RIGHT DISTANCE BETWEEN US WOULD BE...

WE MAY BE FRIENDS...

...BUT AT THE SAME TIME, HE HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART.

STILL, COULD I JUST CALL THIS FEELING LOVE? OR NOT?

I'M JUST AS CONFUSED AS BEFORE...

...AND I DON'T REALLY HAVE A NAME... FOR THIS ODD TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US.

BUT...

TO BE HONEST...

AT LEAST RIGHT NOW...

...I THINK I'M FINE WITH WHAT WE HAVE.

HEARING THAT HE SET HIS EYES ON SOME-THING...

AND KNOWING THAT HE'S GOING TO WORK HARD TOWARD THAT...

...MADE ME FEEL HAPPY, YOU KNOW?

...HOW EXACTLY I FEEL ABOUT HIM, BUT...

I MIGHT NOT HAVE AN ANSWER...

TO GIVE IT MY ALL AND PUSH FORWARD.

JUST AS BEFORE, HE'S SOMEONE WHO MOTIVATES ME TO TRY HARDER.

I WAS ACTING NORMAL TODAY, RIGHT?

I...I THINK YOU DID JUST FINE, YUP!

Like I would with any boy!

B-BUT OF COURSE, I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE HIM TROUBLE OR HURT HIM, SO I'LL STILL BE MINDFUL OF HOW I ACT AROUND HIM!

...

SO FOR NOW...

I FEEL LIKE THAT'S ENOUGH.

SURE...

BUT WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE ON OUR WAY, TOO. I DIDN'T MEAN TO KEEP US HERE TOO LONG.

THAT'S A RELIEF...

YOU KNOW, SUBARU...

...I'LL OBVIOUSLY RESPECT IT.

WHATEVER ANSWER YOU ARRIVE AT...

BUT, WELL...

KAORUKO? IS SOME-THING WRONG?
NOPE! DON'T MIND ME!
SHE ALWAYS SEES RIGHT THROUGH ME YET SHE CAN'T EVEN REALIZE IT HERSELF...

Pâtisserie Maisette

OH, KONNO-SAN. I APPRE-CIATE YOU LOOKING OUT FOR ME AS ALWAYS.

WE'VE GOT A STAFF MEETING AFTER THIS, SO YOU CAN HEAD HOME FOR THE DAY.

WHAT? BUT WE'RE NOT DONE CLEANING UP YET, SO...

NO BUTS, YOU HEAR?

!

RINTARO-KUN! THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP TODAY!

O-OKAY, THEN I'LL DO THAT...

IF WE WORK YOU TO THE BONE ANY MORE THAN THIS, I'M GONNA GET AN EARFUL.

WE'RE ALREADY PAST THE HALFWAY POINT OF AUGUST, HUH...

TIME'S ZOOMING PAST US, SERIOUSLY...

Ahaha!

I THINK IT'S TIME WE MAKE A DECISION.

SCHOOL SUMMER BREAKS ARE ABOUT TO END.

MORE IMPORTANTLY...

FIRST OF ALL, I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE.

I PRACTICALLY FORCED THIS WHOLE THING ON YOU FOLKS.

IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE RINTARO-KUN STARTED WORKING HERE, YEAH?

BUT THAT SAID...

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT HIM?

Chapter 152: Evaluation

CRAP, ALMOST MISSED MY STOP.

WAP

NEXT STOP: BENIGAOKA.

REPEATING: BENIGAO-KA.

...!

紅が丘駅

Sign: Benigaoka Station

...

MY HEAD'S STILL... A BIT FUZZY.

TWO WEEKS HAVE PASSED...

SINCE I BEGAN MY INTERNSHIP.

THIS HERE IS R.NTARO TSUMUGI-KUN.

WE'LL HAVE AN INTERN JOIN US FOR THE TIME BEING.

AS I'VE EXPLAINED THE OTHER DAY.

LIKEWISE!

I HOPE WE GET ALONG!

MY NAME IS R.NTARO TSUMUGI.

THAT'S ALSO PROBABLY WHY LUCAS-SAN GAVE ME THAT OFFER.

WHY DON'T YOU WORK HERE FOR AN INTERNSHIP OF SORTS DURING THAT TIME FRAME?

YOU KIDS HAVE YOUR SUMMER BREAK RIGHT NOW, YES?

...WHO GET TO DECIDE IF YOU'RE ALLOWED TO WORK WITH US.

IT WILL BE OUR STAFF...

I CAN ONLY REALLY WORK THERE THE WHOLE DAY DURING MY SUMMER BREAK.

SEEING AS I'M STILL A STUDENT...

ON MY DAYS OFF, I SIMPLY GET A CALL AND AM TOLD MY SHIFTS FOR THE COMING WEEK.

BUT... WE NEVER REALLY OFFICIALLY DECIDED ON HOW LONG MY STAY WOULD LAST.

AND...

I THINK I'M JUST EXHAUSTED.

IT FEELS LIKE I'M RUNNING INSIDE THE DARKNESS...

...WITHOUT ANY CLEAR GOAL IN THE DISTANCE.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I GAVE IT MY ALL AND TRIED TO CARRY MY WEIGHT...

THE WAY THEIR KITCHEN OPERATES IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HOW I'M USED TO IT.

WHILE THERE ARE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THAT PLACE AND MY FAMILY'S PÂTISSERIE...

BUT...

I HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING...!

DID I DO A DECENT JOB OR NOT?

Hmmm...

NOT GOOD AT ALL! REDO IT!

...AND LUCAS-SAN'S ANYTHING BUT AN OPEN BOOK WHEN IT COMES TO HOW HE REALLY FEELS.

わﾊﾊ RAMBLE

THE CHIEF IS ALWAYS COMPLAINING...

わﾊﾊ RAMBLE

...AND I'M GLAD THAT LUCAS-SAN AND EVERYONE ELSE ARE JUST AS STRICT WITH ME DESPITE JUST BEING AN INTERN.

CLENCH

THAT SAID, I CAN'T DENY IT'S A VALUABLE EXPERIENCE FOR ME...

...IS AN AMAZING PLACE.

...THAT THEIR PÂTISSERIE...

NOT TO MENTION THAT I COULD TELL FROM DAY ONE...

ALL OF THE EMPLOYEES THERE ARE INCREDIBLY TALENTED...

...AND I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE HOW MUCH I'VE LEARNED IN JUST THESE TWO WEEKS.

I CAME UP WITH PLENTY OF DESIGNS FOR MY OWN CAKES, TOO.

GRIP

MY DESIRE... JUST KEEPS ON GROWING STRONGER.

Patisserie Nanette

I REALLY...

...WANT TO WORK THERE.

AND NOW I'M THINKING ABOUT IT AGAIN...

THAT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU CAN'T CHANGE.

THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLESOME TIMES AHEAD.

I WANT YOU TO KEEP GOING AND PUSHING FORWARD SO THAT YOU WON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS.

BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...

I CAN'T CHANGE WHATEVER THE RESULTS WILL BE.

THAT'S RIGHT...

I CAN TORMENT MYSELF OVER IT AS MUCH AS I WANT...

GASP

SHAKE

SHAKE

SLAP

I'LL JUST HAVE TO DO EVERY-THING I CAN...

...UNTIL THE END COMES!

RING RING RING RING

DMP

And I'm

All right!

AND FOR THAT, I'M GOING TO SLEEP EARLY TODAY!

Manager

RING

WHO COULD IT BE...

!

RING RING RING

IS THIS... ABOUT MY SHIFTS?

I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO CALL TOMORROW WHEN THE BAKERY WAS CLOSED...!

...?!

RING RING RING

BEEP

ccept

YEAH, YEAH!

EITHER WAY, I'M GOING TO TELL HIM THAT I AM FREE ALL WEEK!

erie Noi

...

D-DON'T BE!

APOLOGIES FOR CALLING YOU OUT HERE ALL OF A SUDDEN.

BUT... WE'RE CLOSED TODAY, RIGHT?

THAT WE ARE! AND I WOULDN'T WANT IT ANY OTHER WAY.

ALL THIS FREE TIME I CAN USE TO WORK ON SOME RECIPES!

KLANK

AND IN FACT, I WAS THINKING OF PREPARING OUR ASSORTMENT FOR THE UPCOMING FALL SEASON.

FEELS LIKE I'M TALKING TO DAD RIGHT NOW...

It's what I consider pure bliss, in fact.

WOW...!

...IF I COULD ASK YOU TO BE THE **TASTE-TESTER** FOR THESE NEW INVENTIONS OF MINE.

THESE LOOK MAGNIFICENT!

YOU SEE, I WAS HOPING...

...

WHAT...?

BZZZT

BZZZT

BZZZT

BZZZT

BZZZT

HNGH!

KREAK

OH, MY CUP'S EMPTY ALREADY...

UP WE GO...

HA HA HA!

WON-DERFUL WEATHER WE'RE HAVING TODAY...

So much so that I'd rather not go outside, that is.

GLEAM

"UP WE GO"?

THAT SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHING MY FATHER WOULD SAY!

OH, CHIGUSA-SENSEI?

I'M GUESSING YOU'VE ALREADY FINISHED PRE-PARING YOUR LESSONS FOR THE SECOND TERM?

I AM QUITE JEALOUS OF HOW ENERGETIC YOU ARE, CHIGUSA-SENSEI.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOUR FATE, YOU KNOW?

PLEASE DON'T TEASE ME ALL THAT MUCH.

BUT... WELL, YOU'RE NOT ENTIRELY WRONG, I GUESS...

Ha ha...

I'm sorry, really!

BUT YOU'RE STILL IN YOUR LATE 30S, NO?

That's still plenty young!

KREAK

Waaah...

So much work...

I... I THINK I'LL GET SOME MORE COFFEE...

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME AS WELL, SENSEI?

OH, YOU DON'T MIND? I APPRE-CIATE IT.

H Career Survey

Year 3 Cl

NOW THEN...

I SHOULD GET BACK TO WORK MYSELF.

AND HE JUST RECENTLY MADE HIS DECISION TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER... TIME SURE FLIES.

YORITA'S GOT HIS EXAMS NEXT MONTH...

MEANWHILE, NATSUSAWA JUST APPROACHES ME ONE DAY TO SAY HE WANTS TO GET INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AT T-UNIVERSITY...

I COULD TELL HE GAVE IT A LOT OF THOUGHT, AND I'M ALL THE HAPPIER FOR IT.

AND HE LOOKED SO... REFRESHED FOR SOME REASON.

TO HEAR THAT FROM THE SAME PERSON WHO SAID HE WANTED TO GO THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL A SECOND TIME.

Unbelie-vable...

THEN THERE'S USAMI, WHO WANTS TO ATTEND A JUNIOR COLLEGE TO BECOME A PRESCHOOL TEACHER.

I'd like to try it out!

er Name Rintaro Tsumugi

eg a proper path for their future.

WUAH ?!

RAT TLE

STMP STMP

TSUKADA-SENSEI! I BROUGHT US SOME MORE COFFEE.

EXCUSE ME!

IS...

TSU-MUGI?!

HUFF

IS TSUKADA-SENSEI HERE?!

Seriously?

WHAT INSANE TIMING...!

TAT
TAT
SENSEI!
ALSO, YOU COULD'VE AT LEAST WORN YOUR UNI-FORM...
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE TODAY?
!
I... I WAS ACCEPTED!
I GOT THE JOB!

I'M GOING TO WORK THERE!

NICE ONE, TSUMUGI!

TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH...!

HUFF HUFF

OOOH! AWE-SOME!

THE WAY I SEE IT...

...THE MOMENT HE WAS TOLD THEIR DECISION?

HE MUST HAVE SPRINTED OVER THERE...

...I MIGHT BREAK OUT IN TEARS IF I'M NOT CAREFUL.

THIS IS AN ANSWER HE'S SATISFIED WITH.

AND IT SURE LOOKS LIKE...

I'M GOING TO WORK

!

GRAB

?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

...!

PROUD OF YOU!

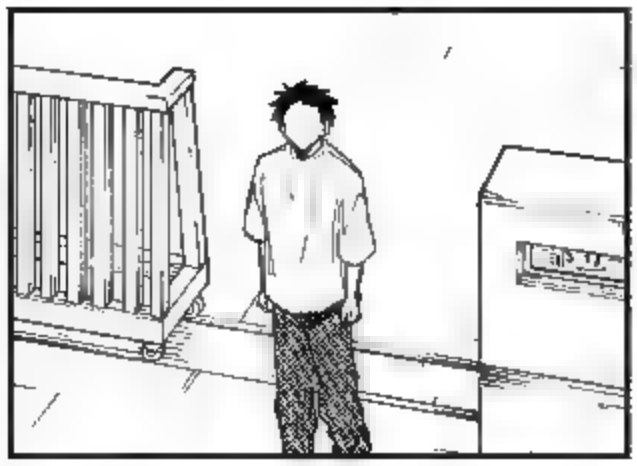
CONGRATS, TSUMUGI!

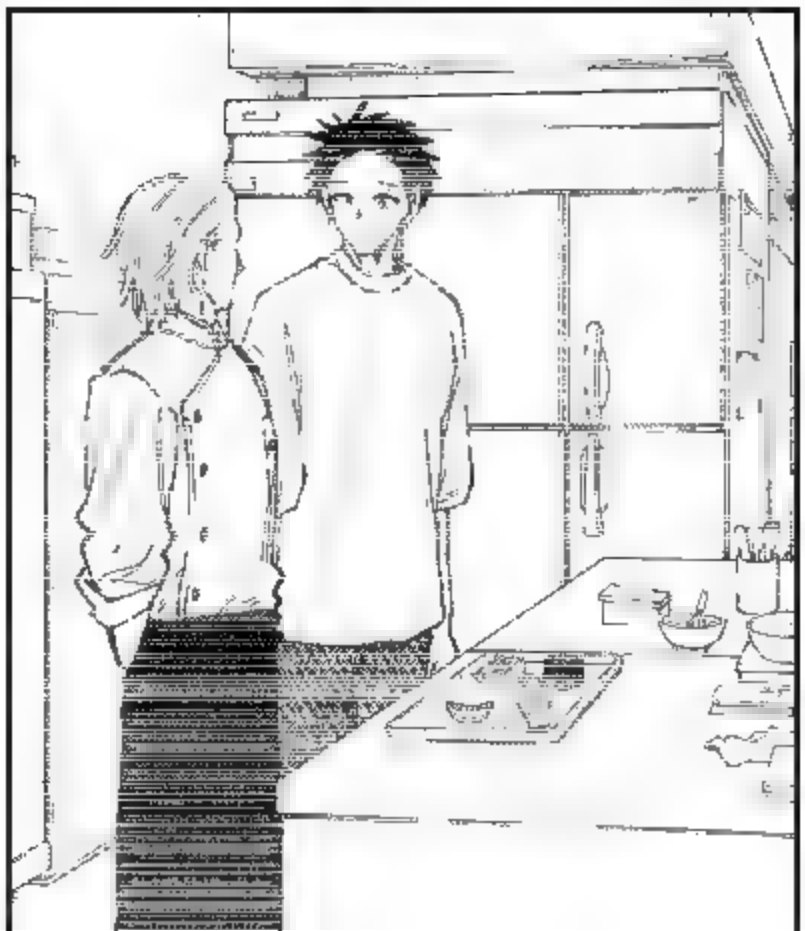
Excuse me?!

Maybe I'll be out that day.

Um... I'd prefer if you didn't. It's embarrassing...

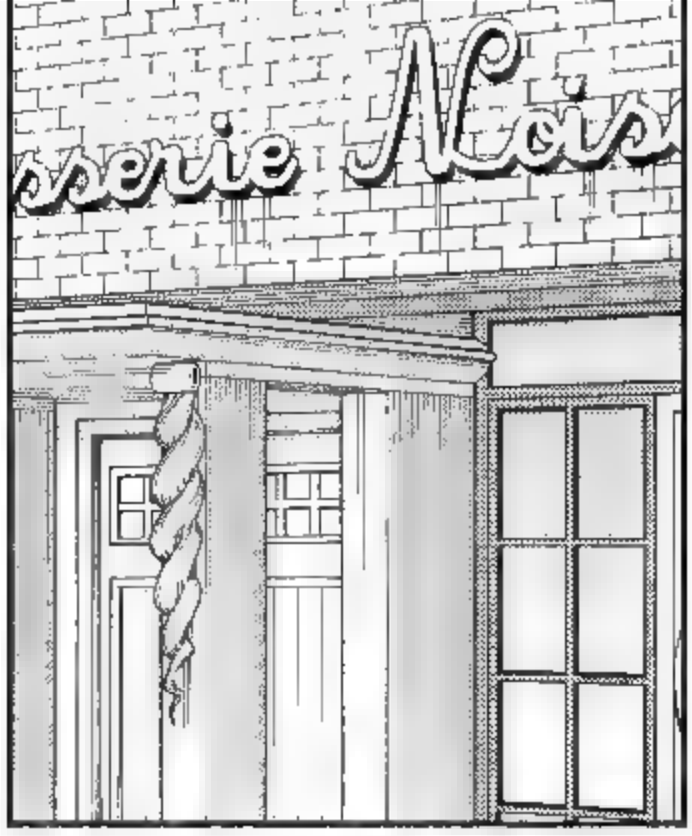
I'm looking forward to visiting you next year!





...!

ALL RIGHT!


serie Nois

LOOK
EXCUSE ME, BUT...
...
LOOK

HE TOOK THE MORNING OFF BECAUSE HE HAD SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF.
HE SHOULD BE BACK IN THE AFTERNOON, THOUGH!
IS THE MANAGER... OUT TODAY?

HENCE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CARRY EVEN MORE WEIGHT FROM NOW ON.

Even if you're just a part-timer now.

STARTING NEXT SPRING, YOU'LL BE A PROPER EMPLOYEE HERE, AFTER ALL.

GLARE

O-OF COURSE NOT!

DON'T THINK YOU GET TO SLACK OFF JUST BECAUSE HE'S NOT WATCHING, ALL RIGHT?

JUST SAY THE WORD!

OF COURSE!

...

I'M GOING TO TRAIN YOU EVEN HARDER, SO I HOPE YOU'RE READY.

plain

紅が丘駅
Benigaoka Sta

5

I'M SORRY TO SHOW UP ON YOUR DAY OFF, REALLY.

紬 TSUMU

IT'S FINE, REALLY.

D-DON'T BE!

WE'RE THANKFUL YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY TO MEET US!

I WAS THE ONE ASKING TO COME VISIT, AFTER ALL.

Chapter 153: The Wall to Break Through

CLOSED

YES

THAT MEANS FOR US

Plain

...

THEN, UNTIL TOMORROW.

...

BEEP

AND? WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT?

WHAA-AAT?!

Since we're closed.

HE'S GOING TO STOP BY TOMORROW.

NAH, WE SHOULD HEAD OVER TO THE NOISETTE OURSELVES.

HE'D BE HAPPIER IF WE CAME TO CHECK OUT HIS PLACE, RIGHT?

Although it's my day off...

MAYBE I SHOULD STOP BY MYSELF JUST TO SAY HELLO...

Holy crap!

THE VERY LUCAS DURAND FROM THE NOISETTE IS COMING OVER TOMORROW?!

IT WAS ENOUGH OF A SHOCK TO HEAR HE WORKED THERE AS AN INTERN, AFTER ALL.

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

STILL, OUR RINTARO-KUN'S GOING TO WORK AT SUCH AN AMAZING PÂTISSERIE, HUH?

I MEAN, HE DID WIN AT AN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT BEFORE.

HONESTLY, I HAD NO IDEA THAT THIS LUCAS-SAN WAS SUCH AN AMAZING PERSON.

DANG, HE'S A BIG SHOT, THROUGH AND THROUGH...

NEVER THOUGHT HE COULD BE THAT GUTSY...

ESPECIALLY FOR HIS PARENTS. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, KYOKO-SAN?

OH, YOU HAVE NO IDEA...

HONESTLY, RINTARO WAS ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT AT THE TIME...

Sorry about that.

IS THAT SO...?

DIDN'T I ALREADY TELL YOU WHEN WE WENT THERE ALL THESE YEARS AGO?

YOUR REACTION'S NO DIFFERENT FROM THEN.

THOUGH I GOTTA ADMIT, YOU DON'T SEEM ALL THAT SHOCKED ABOUT THIS, KASHIWAGI-SAN.

HUH? ME?

I MEAN...

CRAZY THINGS ARE HAPPENING RIGHT NOW!

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN...

Yes, of course!

I'm going to head upstairs for a while. Can you look after the rest?

WE'RE JUST AS POPULAR IF YOU ASK ME.

IN FACT, YOU ALL SEEM TO BE GOING CRAZY OVER THE FACT THAT HE'S FROM NOISETTE, BUT YOU DO REMEMBER WHERE WE WORK, RIGHT?

YOU'RE NOT WRONG, BUT...

IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IT MAKES SENSE.

THAT SAID, WE'RE STANDING ON THE SAME FIELD AS THEM.

AND I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THEY'RE A PÂTISSERIE WORTHY OF RESPECT.

NOT TO RAIN ON YOUR PARADE OR ANYTHING. I'VE GONE THERE MYSELF...

...LOSING TO THEM IN ANY WAY.

I DON'T SEE US FROM PLAIN...

Can't lie there...

WELL, PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS WEAK WHEN IT COMES TO INFLUENCE AND STANDING...

That's right!

Stupid!

NOBODY SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THAT!

TAM

TAM

IT'S NOT WEIRD THAT HE WOULD BE EMPLOYED OVER THERE.

EITHER WAY, HE WAS TRAINED DIRECTLY BY THE OWNER ALL THIS TIME.

...AND I BET HE ENDED UP THIS WAY BECAUSE THE OWNER'S GOT THAT SORT OF UNCOM-PROMISING PERSONALITY...

I'M NOT [illegible]

NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT.

BUT HE'S CLEARLY BEEN TAUGHT BY THE BEST OF THE BEST.

I MUST ADMIT...

NOT TO MEN-TION...

SO, YOU COULD SAY THIS IS AN IRREGULAR CASE.

TAKING IN SOMEONE FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL IS NEW FOR US.

AS SUCH, I JUST HAD TO FORMALLY INTRODUCE MYSELF.

HE JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE THE YOUNG SON OF ANOTHER PÂTISSERIE I KNOW QUITE WELL.

AND NOT TO FOR-GET...

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO VISIT US.

HE KNOWS OUR PLAIN...?

Ha ha ha!

OH, IT'S FINE!

WE USUALLY DON'T GET DIRECT APPLICATIONS LIKE THAT, SO I WAS INDEED A BIT SURPRISED...

I-I'M SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE HE CAUSED YOU!

IT SEEMS LIKE OUR SON APPROACHED YOU ABOUT HIS WISH TO WORK FOR YOU DURING WORK HOURS.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING HIM THE TIME OF DAY DESPITE HOW BUSY YOU MUST HAVE BEEN.

I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND WHEN I SAY THIS...

BUT I DON'T INTEND TO HIRE SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE THE NECESSARY TALENT OR CAPABILITIES.

BUT I'M STILL RUNNING A BUSINESS HERE.

I MADE SURE TO THOROUGHLY ASSESS WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF.

HE WAS HIRED BECAUSE HE CONVINCED EVERYONE OF THE VALUE HE BRINGS TO THE TABLE.

...WHO GET TO DECIDE IF YOU'RE ALLOWED TO WORK WITH US.

FIRST OF ALL, I'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE

I PRACTICALLY FORCED THIS WHOLE THING ON YOU FOLKS.

IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE RINTARO-KUN STARTED WORKING HERE, YEAH?

PLUS, THE FINAL DECISION WHETHER WE SHOULD HIRE HIM OR NOT, I LEFT MOSTLY TO THE OTHER STAFF.

PHEW

...

YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.

AS SUCH, WE'RE CERTAIN THAT HE'S GOING TO BE A RELIABLE STAFF MEMBER FOR OUR ESTABLISH-MENT.

WHICH IS WHY I WANTED TO GIVE HIM A CHANCE.

...BY HIS YOUTHFUL PASSION.

WELL, I CAN'T DENY THAT I WAS MOVED...

KLANK

I AM THE SORT OF PERSON WHO MAKES DECISIONS BASED ON MY EMOTIONS.

AFTER ALL...

AT ANY MOMENT...

I'D CHOOSE TO WALK TOWARD THE PATH...

THAT'S FILLED WITH DAZZLING LIGHT...

...AND EXCITEMENT AHEAD OF ME.

Patisserie Noisette

SIMILARLY, I HAD NO FUNDAMENTAL REASON...

AS TO WHY I DECIDED TO SETTLE DOWN HERE IN JAPAN.

SIMPLY, MY GRANDMOTHER ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE IS JAPANESE AND SHE ALWAYS TAUGHT ME JAPANESE SINCE I WAS YOUNG...

AND SO, I DEVELOPED A LIKING FOR JAPANESE CULTURE.

SO, I MADE MY FINAL DECISION THINKING "I WONDER WHAT SORTS OF THINGS I WOULD ENCOUNTER IF I OPENED A PÂTISSERIE THERE."

IF I MAY, I'M RATHER IMPRESSED AT HOW QUICKLY I CAN ACT ONCE I'VE MADE MY DECISION.

TOK

TH-THAT IS A RATHER OPEN-MINDED OUTLOOK.

I'M CERTAIN THAT RINTARO-KUN'S APPROACH WOULDN'T HAVE LANDED WELL WITH ANY-BODY...

BUT IN MY CASE, I WAS PRACTICALLY BRIMMING WITH EXCITE-MENT!

Ha ha ha!

...WAS WHAT HE TOLD ME DURING OUR DISCUSSION.

BUT WHAT REALLY TICKLED MY CURIOSITY...

...HE TOLD ME STRAIGHT TO MY FACE THAT HE WOULD SURPASS ME ONE DAY.

OF ALL THE THINGS...

...?!

AND LET ME TELL YOU!

MY HEART WAS DANCING WITH JOY AT THOSE WORDS!

I AM SO SORRY FOR MY STUPID SON!

I can't believe he stepped out of line like that!

OH, DON'T BE!

I JUST HOPE HE CAN BACK UP HIS WORDS!

BUT, THE FINAL CALL TO HIRE HIM WAS MADE BY OUR CHIEF...

AND THIS IS WHAT HE TOLD ME:

HONESTLY...

Patisserie Natsuki

I'M POSITIVELY SURPRISED.

I DIDN'T THINK HE WOULD ACTUALLY PULL HIS WEIGHT.

AFTER ALL, HE'S IN HIGH SCHOOL...

AND HE JUST STARTED BAKING CAKES A YEAR AGO, RIGHT?

HE KNOWS HOW VITAL FUNCTIONAL TEAMWORK IS IN A WORK ENVIRONMENT LIKE THIS.

HE IMMEDIATELY ADAPTED TO HOW THINGS OPERATE AROUND

DESPITE OUR WORK-FLOW BEING DIFFERENT FROM HIS FAMILY'S

IT WAS CRYSTAL CLEAR TO ME.

HE WORKED TOWARD ONE GOAL: TO IMPROVE OUR

HE UNDERSTOOD THAT HE WAS MERELY A TINY

HONESTLY, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER WHAT SORT OF TRAINING HE RECEIVED FROM HIS FAMILY.

...FROM HIS PERSONALITY AND NATURE...

AND WHILE THIS SORT OF MATURE MINDSET MIGHT PARTLY STEM...

AND FOR THAT, I WHOLEHEARTEDLY RESPECT YOU.

...BECAUSE OF THE WAY HE HAS BEEN RAISED BY HIS PARENTS.

I HAVE NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THIS WAS MADE POSSIBLE...

I COULD TELL...

...WITH ALL THE LOVE IN THE WORLD.

...THAT HE WAS RAISED...

...

I'M REALLY THANKFUL THAT OUR SON RINTARO...

...IS IN SUCH GOOD HANDS.

HOWEVER, I DON'T WANT YOU TO HOLD BACK ON PROPERLY TEACHING HIM...

BECAUSE HE CAN HANDLE ANY CRITICISM YOU MIGHT THROW AT HIM.

SO...

PLEASE MAKE HIM GROW EVEN MORE.

LEAVE HIM TO ME.
I'D LIKE TO ASK THE SAME OF YOU.

Ha ha ha!

I EXPECTED NOTHING LESS!

H-HEY, YOU STUPID!

WHY'D YOU IMMEDIATELY HAVE TO GO DOWN THAT ROUTE!

AND IF HE DOESN'T PULL HIS WEIGHT, FEEL FREE TO GIVE HIM THE BOOT AT ANY MOMENT.

DAZED (ぼーん…)

...

SO NATURALLY, I HAD A SECONDARY MOTIVE FOR COMING HERE TODAY...

!

Although this is my first time actually coming here.

YOU SEE... I'VE TASTED YOUR CAKES SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE.

I'VE BEEN DYING TO DISCUSS CAKES WITH YOU.

IT WOULD BE MY PLEASURE.

WE'VE GOT TWO CAKE NERDS UNITED HERE...

TH- THESE GUYS...

IT WAS A LOT OF FUN.

Well, I dipped out early, though.

SURELY, WE MUST HAVE GOTTEN CLOSE TO THE TWO-HOUR MARK.

YOU ACTUALLY SPENT ALL THIS TIME JUST TALKING ABOUT CAKES, HUH?

I JUST KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO SAY THAT!

TURN

ANY-WAY...

THE KITCHEN IS WAITING FOR ME.

THEN AGAIN...

WHAT ELSE WOULD I EXPECT, RIGHT?

Patisse

Plain

ALSO, I SHOULD PROBABLY LET YOU KNOW...

...

—THAT RINTARO-KUN ALSO SAID THE FOLLOWING

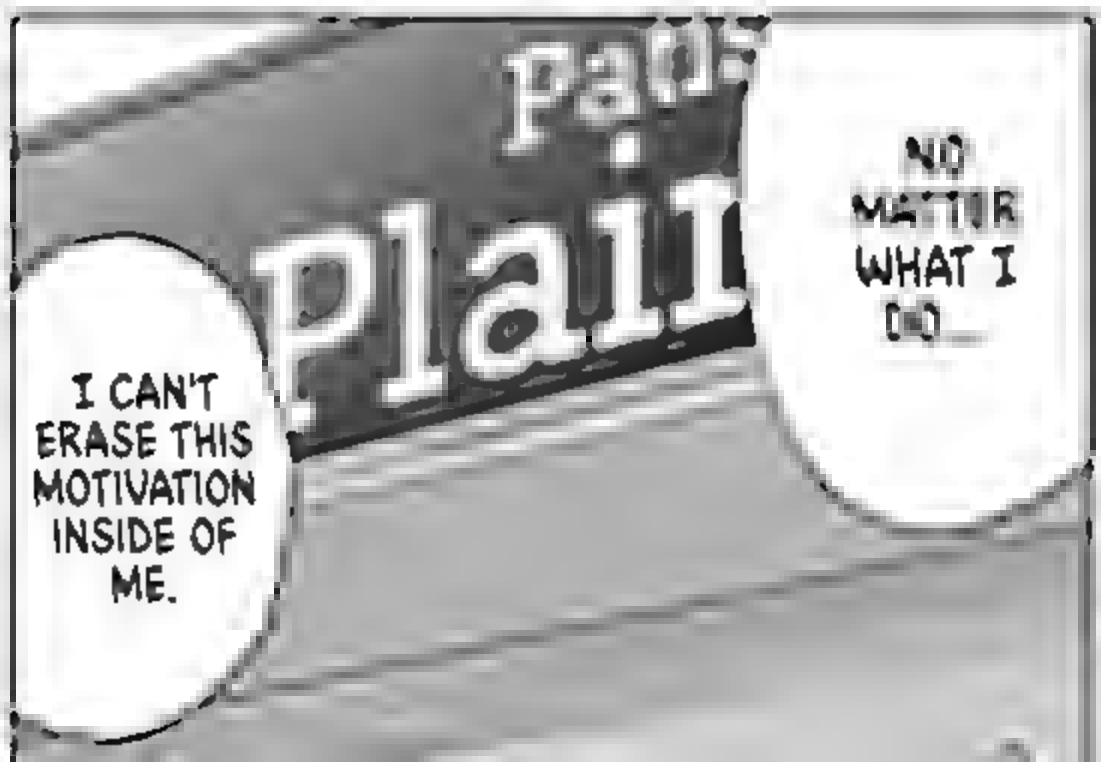
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

IF ONLY YOU COULD SEE YOUR FACE RIGHT NOW...


I CAN'T ERASE THIS MOTIVATION INSIDE OF ME.
NO MATTER WHAT I DO

I'M
YOU KNOW.

...HOW FAR HE CAN REACH FROM NOW ON.

I'M ITCHING TO SEE...

...OF THE INSUR-MOUNTABLE WALL IN FRONT OF HIM.

AND I'LL HAVE TO KEEP PLAYING THE ROLE...

I GUESS SO!

BEFORE YOU LOCK YOURSELF UP IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN...

THAT SAID!

Pâtisserie

Plain

...I SAY WE GRAB A BITE TO EAT FOR LUNCH!

I DOUBT I'D GO FOR THE WESTERN ONES

IF I HAPPENED TO FIND WESTERN AND JAPANESE SWEETS IN FRONT OF ME...

SO SWEET AND FLUFFY.

THAT SMELL

IT'S JUST NOT FOR ME.

Chapter 154: Kyoko and Keiichiro

I MET KEI-CHAN BACK IN FEBRUARY OF MY FIRST YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL.

Home Economics

I FORGOT TO HAND IN MY HOMEWORK FOR MY HOME ECONOMICS CLASS...

SO I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF SEARCHING FOR THE TEACHER, WHEN...

HE'S...

...BAKING CAKES?

IS HE PART OF THE HOME ECONOMICS CLUB?

KYOKO HARISAKI

WHOOPS
KCHAK
s'a stugen
RATTLE

THIS SWEET... SMELL...

It's only gotten trucker...!

HE'S... HUGE...!

AND...

AH...

I WAS LOOKING FOR TAMARU-SENSEI FROM MY HOME ECONOMICS CLASS. I FORGOT TO HAND IN SOME-THING...

AH! UM! WELL!

DO YOU NEED SOME-THING?

!!

SLAM

KCHAK

THANK—

THAT WAS MY FIRST IMPRES-SION OF HIM.

GEEZ, NO NEED TO BE SO RUDE!

OH! ARE YOU SURE?!

IT'S JUST ME HERE, BUT I CAN GET IT TO HER LATER.

HE'S SO NICE...!

TAM

TAM

HE WAS A TOTAL WEIRDO.

I DIDN'T KNOW IF HE WAS A GOOD PERSON OR NOT, BUT EITHER WAY...

!

BUT... I SHOULD AT LEAST THANK HIM PROPERLY...

IT'S HIM!

WAIT A SECOND!

EXCUSE ME!

!

AH, HE'S GONNA LEAVE!

...?

I JUST WANTED TO THANK HIM FOR LAST TIME, AND YET...

ODD...

HERE I AM, HELPING HIM WITH HIS CAKES...

Uh...

DO YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE TIME TODAY AFTER SCHOOL?

I'D LIKE YOU TO BE THE TASTE TESTER FOR MY CAKES.

HE CAME UP WITH THAT ON THE SPOT, HUH?

Sure wasn't slick about it.

KEIICHIRO TSUMUGI, AND...

MY SENPAI.

LIKE I THOUGHT...

HE REALLY IS A WEIRDO.

HARISAKI-SAN?

I just want to get out of this room... This sweetness in the air is too much...

CURSE MY BAD LUCK FOR NOT HAVING ANY TODAY, EITHER...!

THE MOMENT I FOUND OUT HE'S MY SENPAI, I COULDN'T DECLINE ANYMORE. IT'S BEEN DRILLED INTO ME THANKS TO MY CLUB PRACTICE.

TIP

S-SURE...

TOE

I'M READY, SO LET'S GET STARTED.

AH, YES?!

SO... SMALL AND CUTE...
じっ STARE...
Waiting.
!
GTAK カタ...
O-OKAY...
I'LL HAVE A BITE, THEN...
...

...

ATI

WHAT WAS THAT EXPRESSION FOR?

LEAN

MGH!

SO I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE ISSUE WAS.

UM, WELL...

CRAP, DID I MAKE IT THAT OBVIOUS...?!

M-MY EXPRES-SION?!

GULP

THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY ISSUE WITH THE TASTE.

BUT YOUR CONFLICTED REACTION SAID OTHER-WISE.

ZA
POW

IT TASTED... NORMAL.

IT...

CAN I REALLY... BE HONEST HERE?

PLEASE.

I'm not a critic, after all.

IF... IF ANYTHING, THE TASTE IS JUST FINE! I WAS JUST CONFUSED WHY IT FELT SO... HOSTILE? I GUESS.

I'M SORRY, I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT MORE CLEARLY...

AH, WELL, YOU KNOW! I DON'T EAT CAKES OFTEN, SEE!

I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE MY OPINION AS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH...

EVER SINCE THEN...

I APPRE-CIATE THE HONEST FEEDBACK.

IT'S FINE.

...

NOR DID I GET ANY BETTER AT HANDLING THE SWEET SMELL IN THAT ROOM, BUT...

I STILL COULDN'T GIVE HIM ANY PROPER FEEDBACK FOR HIS CAKES...

Hey!

Why is the door locked?!

Oops.

HE WOULD REGULARLY ASK ME TO BE HIS TASTE TESTER.

AND I HELPED HIM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE CLUB PRACTICE.

HE MENTIONED THAT HIS RELATIVES OWN A PÂTISSERIE.

AS HE GREW UP EATING THERE ALL THE TIME, HE WANTED TO TRY AND MAKE SOME OF HIS OWN CAKES.

AND SO, AFTER HE JOINED THE HOME ECONOMICS CLUB, HE'D BEEN WORKING ON THEM PRACTICALLY NON-STOP.

WHILE WE SPENT ALL THAT TIME TOGETHER...

WE TALKED ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS.

SO, THE DAY I STOPPED BY TO HAND IN MY WORK, YOUR CLUB DIDN'T HAVE A MEETING AT ALL?!

And that's why you were here all alone?!

GENERALLY, YEAH. I DON'T REALLY TAKE BREAKS.

ON DAYS WITH NO CLUB WORK, I GET PERMISSION FROM THE TEACHER TO USE THIS ROOM, TOO.

DO YOU ALWAYS BAKE CAKES WHENEVER YOU HAVE SOME FREE TIME?

YOU COULD ALWAYS USE THAT FREE TIME FOR SOMETHING ELSE, YOU KNOW?

MEETING UP WITH FRIENDS OR GOING SOMEWHERE TO HAVE FUN?

I MEAN... AT THE END OF THE DAY, I JUST WANT TO WORK ON MY CAKES, AND THAT'S WHAT I END UP DOING.

YOU'RE A STUBBORN ONE...

PLUS, WHEN I DON'T WANT TO BE INTERRUPTED, I GO OUT OF MY WAY TO LOCK THE DOOR, REMEMBER?

TO BE HONEST...

THAT REALLY GIVES YOU...

...A HORRIBLE IMPRESSION.

Very bad; in fact.

...?!

THE MORE AND MORE I TALKED WITH HIM...

THE CLEARER IT BECAME TO ME THAT HE REALLY WAS A WEIRD PERSON.

Ha ha ha!

You weren't even aware of it?!

SNEAK

そ～っ…

OH!

HE'S AT IT AGAIN TODAY.

Thanks!

Good luck with your club practice, Kyoko!

...?

AH, I GOT SPOT-TED.

SNICKER

HE MIGHT SEEM UNSOCIABLE AND BLUNT, BUT HE'S ALWAYS BRIMMING WITH PASSION...

AND HE DOESN'T SHY AWAY FROM GIVING IT HIS ALL.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I STARTED HELPING HIM OUT...

AND HE'S FINALLY GREETING ME PROPERLY.

SEEING HIM LIKE THAT...

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT HE'S ACTUALLY REALLY COOL.

ALL RIGHT, TIME TO GIVE IT MY ALL, TOO!

National
High School
Volleyball
Tournament
Tokyo

HARI-SAKI-SAN.

!

DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?

...!

GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME. I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A SECOND.

AH, SURE!

IS HE GONNA CONFESS OR SOME-THING?!

I'M SORRY, BUT...

I DON'T THINK I CAN HELP YOU AGAIN ANYTIME SOON.

AFTER WE LOST IN THE TOURNAMENT A WHILE AGO, ALL THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS RETIRED, RIGHT?

...

AS IT TURNS OUT, I WAS CHOSEN AS THE NEXT CAPTAIN.

Ha ha ha!

I REALLY WANT TO FOCUS ON MY CLUB FROM NOW ON! I'M SORRY!

BUT NOW THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY IS IN MY HANDS, I WANT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN, SO...

OF COURSE, I'LL ALWAYS SUPPORT YOU FROM THE SHADOWS IN THE HOPES...

.. THAT YOU'LL BAKE THE SORT OF CAKES YOU CAN BE SATISFIED WITH!

... I UNDER-STAND.

YET AGAIN, IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT...

I PUT UP A GOOD FRONT.

I DID SO WHEN I WAS WITH THE THIRD-YEAR SENPAI AS THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY THE ONES FRUSTRATED THE MOST AFTER OUR DEFEAT.

SAME AS WHEN I WAS WITH THE REST OF THE CLUB MEMBERS.

TO THE POINT THAT IT BECAME A HABIT OF MINE.

NOT TO MENTION...

...AS HE KEEPS PUSHING FORWARD RELENTLESSLY, NOT BACKING DOWN NO MATTER THE OBSTACLE

IF I WERE TO STAY AROUND HIM...

RIGHT NOW, AS I AM DROWNING IN RESPONSIBILITY AND UNCERTAINTY

THE WAY I AM RIGHT NOW.

I WOULD BE OVERWHELMED BY HIS BURNING PASSION

WHILE I'D FEEL MORE AND MORE PATHETIC ABOUT MYSELF

I WANT TO FIND THE STRENGTH TO KEEP TRYING MYSELF...

EVEN THOUGH...

...

IT'S ALMOST SUMMER BREAK...

MEANING THERE WILL BE MORE CLUB PRACTICE, TOO...

Obviously...

THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY THINGS I HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND NOW THAT I'M THE CAPTAIN...

BUT I WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THIS POSITION, SO I'VE GOT TO STAY STRONG FOR EVERYONE'S SAKE...

EARTH. TO. KYOKO!

WAA-AH?!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU SCREAM-ING AT ME FOR?!

THIS GUY YOU WERE TALKING TO A WHILE AGO JUST CAME UP TO ME!

TOLD ME TO GIVE YOU A MESSAGE!

...WHAT?

Home Economics

WE DON'T HAVE PRACTICE TODAY, SO...

...IT'S FINE.

SORRY FOR SUDDENLY CALLING YOU OVER. I KNOW YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO PRIORITIZE YOUR CLUB.

!

I PROMISE THAT TODAY WILL BE THE LAST TIME I'LL ASK FOR YOUR FEED-BACK.

IN RETURN...

TOK

IF YOU WOULD, PLEASE.

WEIRD...

WHAT BROUGHT THIS UP?

SURE...

...BUT HE'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS FROM THE MOMENT WE'VE MET...

OH, WELL...

IT MIGHT BE SUDDEN...

I'LL HAVE A BITE...

...

...

IT'S... DELI- CIOUS...

...FROM EVERYTHING I'VE HAD BEFORE.

WHY?

IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

CALMING, EVEN.

...AND IT FEELS SO... RELAXING.

THAT HOSTILE FEELING... IS GONE...

WHY...

...DOES IT HAVE SUCH A GENTLE TASTE NOW?

I'M SORRY...

JUST... GIVE ME A MOMENT, PLEASE...

SEEMS LIKE I MANAGED TO MAKE A
I'M GLAD.

I GUESS I'LL STEP OUT FOR A MOMENT.

W- WAIT!

WAP

PLEASE ...

...STAY.

STAY WITH ME...

JUST...

...HAVE TO SAY ANY-THING...

YOU DON'T...

IF I HAPPENED TO FIND WESTERN AND JAPANESE SWEETS... IN FRONT OF ME...

...I DOUBT I'D GO FOR THE WESTERN ONES.

THAT SMELL... SO SWEET AND FLUFFY...

IT'S JUST NOT FOR ME.

...WHAT I THOUGHT, BUT...

GULP

THAT IS...

MAYBE SPENDING SO MUCH TIME IN HERE...

...MADE ME GET USED TO IT.

OR COULD IT BE...

...THANK YOU FOR THE TREAT.

THEY MAKE ME FEEL COM-FORTABLE.

THE SOUND OF MERINGUE AND EGGS BEING MIXED...

THE SCENT OF VANILLA ESSENCE...

...I HAVE THESE THINGS BY MY SIDE...

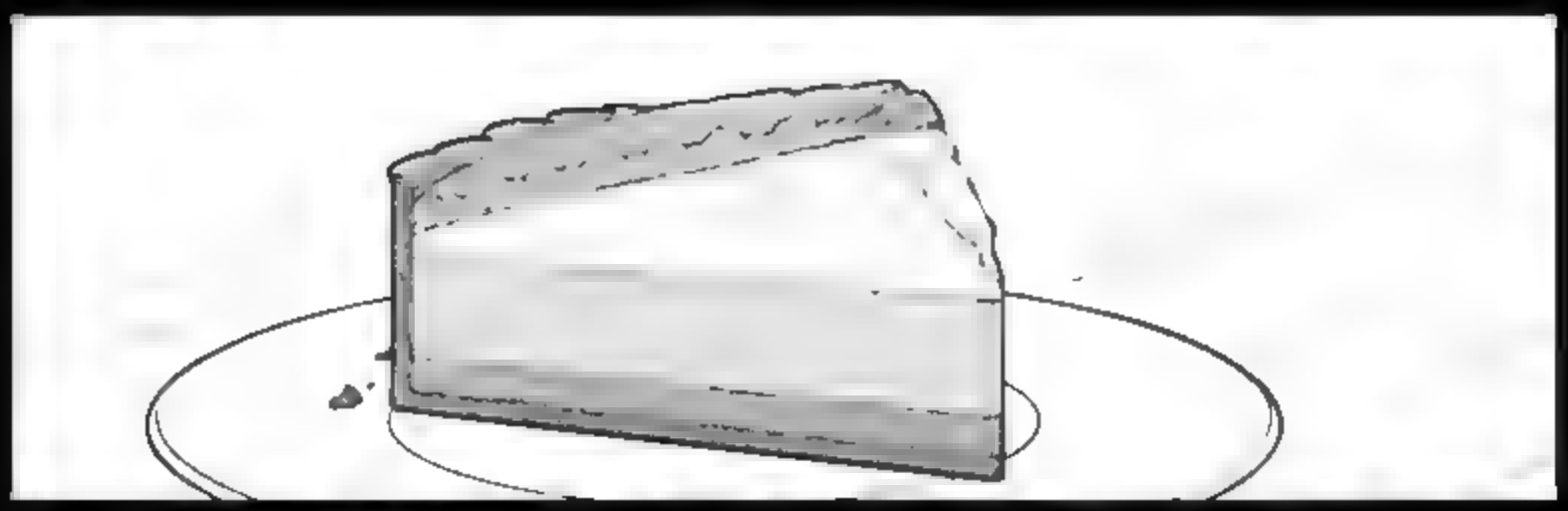
AS LONG AS...

...I DON'T NEED...

...ANYTHING ELSE.

Chapter 155: Keiichiro and Kyoko

Plaisir
プレジール



IT'S DELICIOUS.
...YUP.

KEIICHIRO TSUMUGI
(HIGH SCHOOL 3RD YEAR)

THE DIFFERENCE IS NIGHT AND DAY.

YOU'VE IMPROVED A LOT, KEIICHIRO.

COME ON NOW... JUST ACCEPT THE COMPLIMENT WITHOUT THE SNARK.

...WELL, I DID KEEP AT IT.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT ANYWAY.

WHO'RE GOING TO EAT IT.

YOU STARTED THINKING ABOUT THE PEOPLE...

INSTEAD OF SINGLE-MINDEDLY FOCUSING ON THE CAKE...

I CAN FEEL A PERSONAL WARMTH FROM IT.

IT'S A GREAT CAKE.

YOU'D BETTER BE THANKFUL TO THAT GIRL, YOU HEAR?

WHAT GIRL?

C'MON, YOU KNOW THE ONE.

...

YOUR TASTE TESTER.

You made this cake with her in mind, didn't you?

...

OH, HER...

YOU FIRST MENTIONED HER...AROUND SIX MONTHS AGO?

ISN'T THAT WHEN IT STARTED?

THAT'S WHEN YOU GOT EVEN MORE OBSESSED...

AND THE DRASTIC CHANGES IN YOUR WORK BEGAN.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

...

THIS DENSE BRAT...

...?

SO? SPILL THE BEANS.

WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU?

WAP

WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS... I WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY, WASN'T I?

OH, WELL!

THAT'LL BE A STORY FOR ANOTHER DAY!

WHEN I SAID YOU SHOULD GET MORE INVOLVED WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU...

AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM...

...

BECAUSE THAT WAS CLEARLY...

WHAT YOU NEEDED THE MOST.

...ROUGHLY HALF A YEAR AGO DURING THE WINTER OF MY SECOND YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL.

HE DID TELL ME THAT...

[illegible] WITH YOUR CLASSMATES, [illegible]

GO ON A DATE WITH A GIRL WHO CATCHES YOUR EYE...

[illegible]

[illegible]

AT THE TIME, I COULDN'T UNDER-STAND

WHY I NEEDED TO DO ALL OF THOSE THINGS.

Home Economics

YOU NEED EXPERIENCES LIKE THAT...

OR YOU'LL NEVER MAKE A DELICIOUS CAKE

THAT WAS MORE FUN TO ME.

I JUST PRIORITIZED MY CAKES OVER DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

IT'S NOT LIKE I COMPLETELY SHUT MYSELF OFF FROM THE WORLD.

...BUT THAT'S NEVER REALLY BOTHERED ME OR LED TO ANY TROUBLE.

I'M SURE EVERYONE THINKS I'M BORING...

I WAS NEVER GOOD AT SHOWING EMOTION OR EVEN FAKING A SMILE.

I EVEN ASKED THE HOME ECONOMICS CLUB ADVISOR AND OTHER MEMBERS TO TRY MY CAKES.

...AND NEEDED SOME SORT OF HINT...

WHEN I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT MY UNCLE WAS TRYING TO SAY...

AND WHEN SOMETHING CAME UP, I'D TAKE THE INITIATIVE MYSELF.

RATTLE

HUH?!

I GUESS THAT'S WHY...

TAM

TAM

BUT THAT WAS ALL THEY TOLD ME, LEAVING ME STILL IN THE DARK...

It's really good!

THE DOOR'S UNLOCKED AGAIN...!

Weird!

HELLO SENPAI!

ZA DOW

IT TASTED... NORMAL.

IT...

...

...AND...

MADE ME KIND OF HAPPY.

...THAT REACTION OF HERS FELT SO REFRESHING...

IT MADE ME WANT TO HEAR HER...

CALL MY CAKES DELICIOUS.

THANKS AGAIN FOR THE TREAT!

GLENCH

!!

IT WAS DELICIOUS AS ALWAYS, SENPAI!

GLAD TO HEAR IT.

IT'S JUST... SOME STUFF HAPPENED, SO I FIGURED I COULD START DROPPING BY AGAIN!

SOME STUFF? SUCH AS?

AND I AM! I HAVEN'T NEGLECTED THAT ONE BIT!

BUT... I THOUGHT YOU WERE DONE GIVING ME FEED-BACK?

DIDN'T YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON YOUR CLUB?

?

MUMBLE

SOME... STUFF...

...!

WELL, YOU KNOW...

SINCE I LOVE... YOUR CAKES, SENPAI.

FIDGET

FIDGET

A-AND... I'M NOT REALLY COMING TO HELP YOU ANYMORE...

IT'S MORE LIKE I'M COMING TO RECHARGE MY BATTERIES.

THANKS, I APPRE-CIATE IT.

I BET HE REALIZED HOW I FEEL BY NOW!

OH GOSH, LISTEN TO ME SAYING "LOVE" LIKE THAT...

THIS... OBLIVIOUS CAKE-FOR-BRAINS...!

I HEARD YOU THE FIRST TIME...

I SAID THANK YOU.

?

...

THAT TIME...

AS IT TURNS OUT, I WAS CHOSEN AS THE NEXT CAPTAIN.

Ha ha ha

AFTER WE LOST IN THE TOURNAMENT A WHILE AGO, ALL THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS RETIRED, RIGHT?

I COULD SORT OF TELL SHE WAS PUTTING ON A BRAVE FACE.

...THAT YOU'LL BAKE THE SORT OF CAKES YOU CAN BE SATISFIED WITH!

OF COURSE, I'LL ALWAYS SUPPORT YOU FROM THE SHADOWS IN THE HOPES...

...

Well, it could've been worse...

...I DOUBT I COULD HAVE SAID ANYTHING TO HELP.

AND EVEN IF I DID...

BUT IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE SOMETHING I SHOULD PRY INTO.

SO, IN PLACE OF THE WORDS...

I COULDN'T OFFER...

...I MADE HER A CAKE.

Ha ha ha!

You weren't even aware of it?!

I WANTED TO CHEER HER UP...

I'm actually crying!

Oh, man...

...IF ONLY A LITTLE...

...SO I COULD SEE HER SMILE LIKE ALWAYS.

HEY, SENPAI?

YEAH?

THERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN BUGGING ME.

...!

DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU LOCKED IT WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ALONE?

Today was no exception...

WHY HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LOCKING THE DOOR LATELY?

SO I WAS WONDERING WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT.

YOU USED TO KEEP THE DOOR LOCKED EVEN WHEN I WAS YOUR TASTE TESTER...

PLUS, I'VE BEEN SHOWING UP UNANNOUNCED A LOT THESE DAYS...

Well, can't say I'm surprised!

SHE FINALLY HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR ANTICS, HUH?

Ha ha ha!

OUR ADVISOR, TAMARU-SENSEI, TOLD ME TO STOP...

THE SCENT OF VANILLA ESSENCE...

THE SOUND OF MERINGUE AND EGGS BEING MIXED...

THEY MAKE ME FEEL COM-FORTABLE.

AS LONG AS...

...I HAVE THESE THINGS BY MY SIDE...

...I DON'T NEED...

...ANY-THING ELSE.

And you know what my friend did?

THAT'S...

...WHAT I THOUGHT, BUT...

TSUMUGI-SENPAI!

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR GRADUATION!

...THANK YOU.

You came running just for that?

OH, HARISAKI-SAN...

ARE YOU... ALREADY HEADING HOME...?

きょろ LOOK

きょろ LOOK

AFTER I SAY GOODBYE TO MY CLUB ADVISOR...

PRETTY MUCH...

UM... IF IT'S ALL RIGHT WITH YOU...

?

SO...

COULD WE...

GO SOMEWHERE TOGETHER... SOMETIME?

Y-YOU KNOW! TO, UM...

TO CELEBRATE YOUR GRADUATION!

LIKE, ANYWHERE YOU WANT TO GO!

AH HAH HAH

たはは。

...OR SOME-THING!

YOU'D RATHER WORK ON YOUR CAKES, I BET...

YOU CAN PICK THE PLACE, HARISAKI-SAN.

SO LET'S GO SOME-WHERE...

...

...TOGE-THER.

...FOR REAL?

SO LET'S GO SOMEWHERE...

MHMMM!

SO GOOD!

Chapter 156: A Gentle Taste and a Sweet Scent

...BUT IT'S PRETTY TOUGH FOR A GIRL TO COME HERE ALONE, YOU KNOW?

I'M REALLY GLAD I GOT THE CHANCE TO COME HERE!

I'VE BEEN MEANING TO CHECK THIS PLACE OUT...

特製ラーメン
みそラーメン
しおラーメン
しょうゆラーメン
豚骨ラーメン
野菜ラーメン
タンタンメン

THEN AGAIN, MY CLUB KEEPS ME PRETTY BUSY, SO I DON'T REALLY GO OUT THAT OFTEN IN THE FIRST PLACE.

HMM... CAFÉS, I GUESS?

MY FRIENDS LOVE EVERYTHING THAT'S TRENDY, SO I TAG ALONG WITH THEM.

WHERE DO YOU USUALLY GO?

...SO I SAY, BUT...

AND IF I'M GOING TO EAT SOMETHING, IT'S GOTTA BE HEARTY!

TO ME, AT LEAST, THIS **TECHNICALLY** COUNTS AS A DATE, RIGHT?

MAYBE A RAMEN RESTAURANT WAS A WEIRD CHOICE FOR A FIRST ONE?!

...UNTIL I TOTALLY OVER-THOUGHT IT, GAVE UP...

AND DECIDED TO CHOOSE A PLACE THAT I WANTED TO CHECK OUT MYSELF.

A café? A restaurant? Since we're students, our options are pretty limited...!

...HE SAID, SO I MULLED IT OVER...

YOU CAN PICK THE PLACE, HARISAKI-SAN.

IT'S HARD TO TELL WHAT HE'S THINKING... SO I'M NOT SURE.

MAYBE HE WOULD'VE BEEN HAPPIER WITH A PLACE THAT SERVES CAKES.

GLANCE チラ…

GOING TO A CAFÉ OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT MIGHT'VE BEEN THE BETTER OPTION...

IT'S JUST...

O-OH...

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

!

Oh god, I told him everything...!

I MEAN, I CHOSE THIS PLACE WITHOUT REALLY CONSIDERING WHAT YOU'D BE INTO...

SO I WAS JUST CURIOUS IF... THIS IS EVEN FUN FOR YOU AT ALL, I GUESS...?

I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE WE SHOULD'VE GONE TO A CAFÉ OR SOMETHING INSTEAD!

GULP

I'M HAVING FUN.

...?

I...

I SEE...

I DON'T ONLY EAT CAKE, OKAY?

Is that now you see me?

YOU PRACTICALLY EAT CAKE FOR ALL OF YOUR MEALS...

SO IN A SENSE, MAYBE I WAS RIGHT TO BRING YOU HERE!

¥500
¥500
¥800
¥900

SO BEAUTI-FUL...!

I asked him to go on a walk thinking he'd say no.

HE'S ACTUALLY TAGGING ALONG, HUH?

I NEVER IMAGINED HE'D ACTUALLY AGREE TO MEET UP...

SO LET'S GO SOME-WHERE...

...TOGE-THER...

...BUT I GUESS EVEN SOMEONE LIKE HIM GOES OUTSIDE FROM TIME TO TIME.

...OH.

YOU'VE GOT A FLOWER PETAL ON YOUR SHOULDER, SENPAI.

Pardon me

HUH?

SO...

...

...

HAHA. I WAS JUST KIDDING!

BUT..

I DO GO OUTSIDE, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW.

Ha ha ha!

That thought's been running through my head

SEEING YOU OUTSIDE FEELS SO DIFFERENT. LIKE SOMETHING DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT

...SPRING KIND OF SUITS YOU, SENPAI.

...I THINK...

MAYBE BECAUSE I WAS BORN IN THE SPRING?

OH, REALLY?! WHAT MONTH?

USING THE FLOWER PETAL AS AN EXCUSE TO TRY AND TOUCH HIM MADE ME FEEL EMBARRASSED...

SO, I ASSUME I BLURTED OUT THAT NONSENSE BECAUSE OF THAT...

BUT IT WAS PROBABLY BECAUSE HE'S GIVING OFF THIS WARM FEELING...

...THAT RESONATES WITH THE SWEET SCENT FOLLOWING HIM.

ALMOST LIKE THE SNOW HAS MELTED SINCE WE FIRST MET.

GOOD THING WE FOUND A BENCH!

GOSH, WE WALKED SO FAR.

YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU DON'T SEEM TIRED AT ALL, SENPAI.

I HAVE TO STAND A LOT FOR MY WORK...

THE MORE STAMINA I HAVE, THE LONGER I CAN WORK ON THEM.

IT ALL LEADS BACK TO THAT, I SEE...

I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SPEND THAT TIME ON CAKES!

SERI-OUSLY?! I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED!

AND I DO JOG ON OCCASION.

...

I HAD NO IDEA...

HUH... THAT'S INTEREST-ING.

...I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIM, HUH?

THERE'S STILL SO MUCH...

I'LL NEVER FIND THAT SPARK TO CHANGE OUR RELATIONSHIP.

BECAUSE IF I DON'T TELL HIM HOW I FEEL TODAY...

I THOUGHT LONG AND HARD ABOUT WHAT I SHOULD DO.

WHILE WAITING FOR THIS DAY...

hmmm I haven't decided yet

I'll probably go to university

AND EVEN IF OUR RELATIONSHIP DID PROGRESS...

WOULDN'T I JUST GET IN THE WAY OF WHAT HE REALLY WANTS TO DO?

BUT...

DO I EVEN WANT IT TO CHANGE?

what are your plans after graduation?

I...

WANT TO KEEP TALKING TO HIM.

GRIP

...IF IN THE FUTURE, WE LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER...

BUT...

HEY, SENPAI?

WOULD YOU... LIKE TO OPEN YOUR OWN BAKERY ONE DAY?

FOR-EVER...

JUST LIKE THIS...

WELL ...

THE PLANS ARE STILL PRETTY VAGUE, BUT...

YEAH, I WOULD.

I'D LIKE IT TO BE...

THE KIND OF BAKERY THAT WARMS THE HEARTS...

...OF THE CUSTOMERS WHO COME IN.

A PLACE WHERE, EVEN IF SOMETHING SAD HAP-PENS...

THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR THEM...

...TO PUT ON A BRAVE FACE.

A BAKERY WHERE SIMPLY EATING THE CAKE...

...HELPS YOU BE YOUR TRUE SELF.

THAT'S THE SORT OF PLACE I'D LIKE TO HAVE.

THAT SOUNDS WONDER-FUL.

DOES IT HAVE SUCH A GENTLE TASTE

...

I DON'T WANT TO GET IN HIS WAY.

YEAH...

...YOU'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN, SENPAI!

I'M SURE...

...MY UNCLE TOLD ME SOME-THING.

!

A WHILE AGO...

...IF I WANTED TO MAKE DELICIOUS CAKES.

GO ON A DATE WITH A GIRL WHO CATCHES YOUR EYE

HANG OUT WITH YOUR CLASSMATES, HAVE LUNCH TOGETHER..

YOU KNOW, KEIICHI-RO.

YOU SHOULD SOCIALIZE MORE

AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM...

WHEN I SAID YOU SHOULD GET MORE INVOLVED WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU...

THAT I WOULD NEED TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS...

...WHY THAT WAS IMPORTANT.

I NEVER UNDER-STOOD...

...ALL THE EMOTIONS OUT THERE.

BECAUSE I HAD TO LEARN ABOUT...

BUT IT'S PROBA-BLY...

AND THEN PUT THOSE FEELINGS INTO MY CAKES.

I NEED TO FALL IN LOVE...

SURROUND MYSELF WITH MORE PEOPLE THAT INSPIRE EMOTIONS IN ME...

THAT DAY...

...

...I SAW YOUR BACK... WHILE YOU WERE CRYING.

...WHEN YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO FOCUS ON YOUR CLUB...

AND IT WAS THEN...

...TO SEE YOU SMILE AGAIN.

...WANTING...

...THAT I FOUND MYSELF...

FROM THAT POINT ON...

I SPENT MORE AND MORE OF MY TIME THINKING ABOUT YOU...

...SWIRLING STRONGLY INSIDE OF ME.

I'VE FELT ALL SORTS OF EMOTIONS...

IF I HAD EVEN A MOMENT OF FREE TIME...

THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO SPEND IT ON.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT ...

THE ONLY GOOD USE OF MY TIME WAS BAKING CAKES.

...ANYTHING ELSE.

I DON' NEED

I LIKE JUST AS MUCH...

BUT NOW...

NO, EVEN MORE...

...SPENDING TIME WITH YOU...

...HARI-SAKI-SAN.

I MEAN, I CHOSE THIS PLACE WITHOUT REALLY CONSIDERING WHAT YOU'D BE INTO

SO I WAS JUST CURIOUS IF THIS IS EVEN FUN FOR YOU AT ALL, I GUESS ?

I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE WE SHOULD'VE GONE TO A CAFE OR SOMETHING INSTEAD!

IT'S HARD TO TELL WHAT HE'S THINKING SO I'M NOT SURE

MAYBE HE WOULD'VE BEEN HAPPIER WITH A PLACE THAT SERVES CAKES.

I'M HAVING FUN.

...?

AND...

...AND THINKING ABOUT YOU.

I'LL KEEP BAKING CAKES...

SO...

I WOULD LIKE IT...

I DON'T

KEEP EATING THEM FROM NOW ON.

...!

...YES.

I WILL...

...

I'M... REALLY HAPPY.

I...

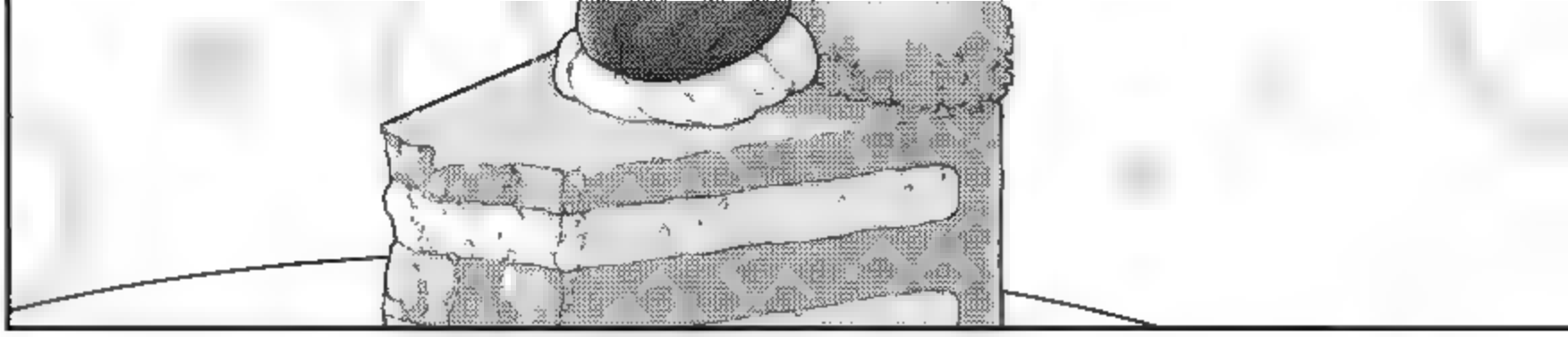
TSU-MUGI-SEN-PAI...

...THINK THAT YOUR CAKES...

ARE THE BEST.

THEIR GENTLE TASTE...
...AND SWEET SCENT...

I LOVE IT ALL.



Okay!

17:31

I'm gonna wait at the south entrance!

Read
17:31

I'll be there in 4

Chapter 157: This Year's Summer Festival

...THE LAST DAY OF SUMMER BREAK.

花菲駅
Hananira Station

南口
South Entrance
南入口

TODAY IS...

BEEP

!

AT THE END OF AUGUST THERE'S A SUMMER FESTIVAL HAPPENING. CAN WE GO THERE ON A DATE?

AND IT IS ALSO THE DAY OF THE SUMMER FESTIVAL...

WE PROMISED TO GO TO.

カシ
カシ
カシ

SHE'S SO FOCUSED...

AH.
FREEZE

SNAP
ぱちん
!
...PER-FECT.

M-MY BAD!

I JUST FIGURED I SHOULDN'T INTERRUPT, SO...

BLUSH

ぼっ!!

WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANY-THING?!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, RINTARO-KUN!

Sorry...

Geez!

I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!

...ME TOO!

GLEAM

LOOK AT ALL THESE STALLS!

HE HE

CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED THAT THIS IS HOW YOU PSYCHED YOURSELF UP.

BECAUSE I MADE SURE TO SKIP LUNCH JUST FOR THE FESTIVAL!

Hmm

WHAT SHOULD WE EAT FIRST?

OH, THERE'S SO MUCH I CAN'T DECIDE...!

BUT I BET THAT I COULD EAT ALL OF IT RIGHT NOW!

!

I'M GOING TO START WITH THE ONES I DIDN'T GET TO EAT LAST YEAR.

IT'S ALREADY BEEN...
A YEAR SINCE THEN...?
I LIKE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, YOU.
...RINTARO-KUN!
IT'S NOT THE SAME ONE AS LAST YEAR...
BUT SUMMER FESTIVALS ARE SPECIAL TO US, RIGHT?
BEING ABLE TO GO TO ANOTHER ONE TOGETHER...
MAKES ME REALLY HAPPY.
...YEAH.
NOT TO MENTION, WE PROBABLY WON'T BE ABLE...
TO MEET UP AS MUCH FROM NOW ON.

RIGHT, RINTARO-KUN?

WHICH IS WHY WE'VE GOTTA ENJOY TODAY AS MUCH AS WE CAN!

3 TURN

ABSO-LUTELY.

ONE, TWO, THREE!

ROGER.

THEN, ON THREE, LET'S SAY WHAT WE WANNA EAT FIRST!

PERFECT!

YAKISOBA!

WHAT FLAVOR DID YOU GO WITH?

BLUE HAWAII.

OH! THE ONE THAT TURNS YOUR TONGUE BLUE!

HEY, RINTARO-KUN...

YEAH?

...

...SO I WAS WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED WITH THAT.

YOU SAID THAT THERE WAS NO END DATE SET FOR IT...

!

ARE YOU STILL HELPING OUT... AT THAT BAKERY FROM BEFORE?

ACTUAL-LY...

OH, YEAH. SORRY...

...!

WHAA-AAT?!

I GOT A JOB OFFER...

TO WORK THERE.

I'M REALLY SORRY!

TELL ME THAT, GEEZ!

...

W-WAIT, WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?! RECENTLY?!

AROUND... A WEEK AGO.

I EVEN CONSIDERED CALLING YOU JUST FOR THAT...

WHEN I GOT ACCEPTED, I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW RIGHT AWAY...

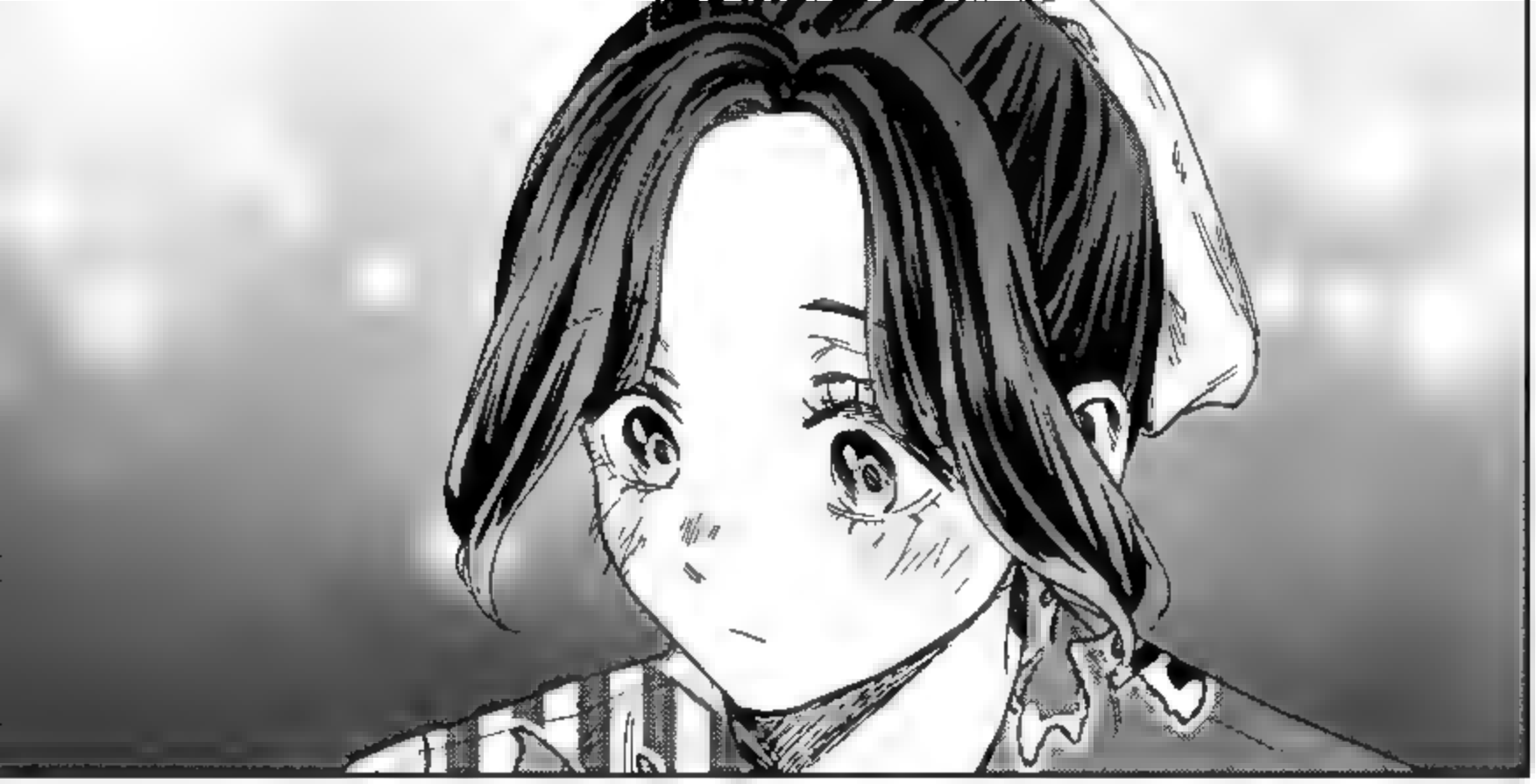
BUT I COULDN'T FIND THE RIGHT TIME.

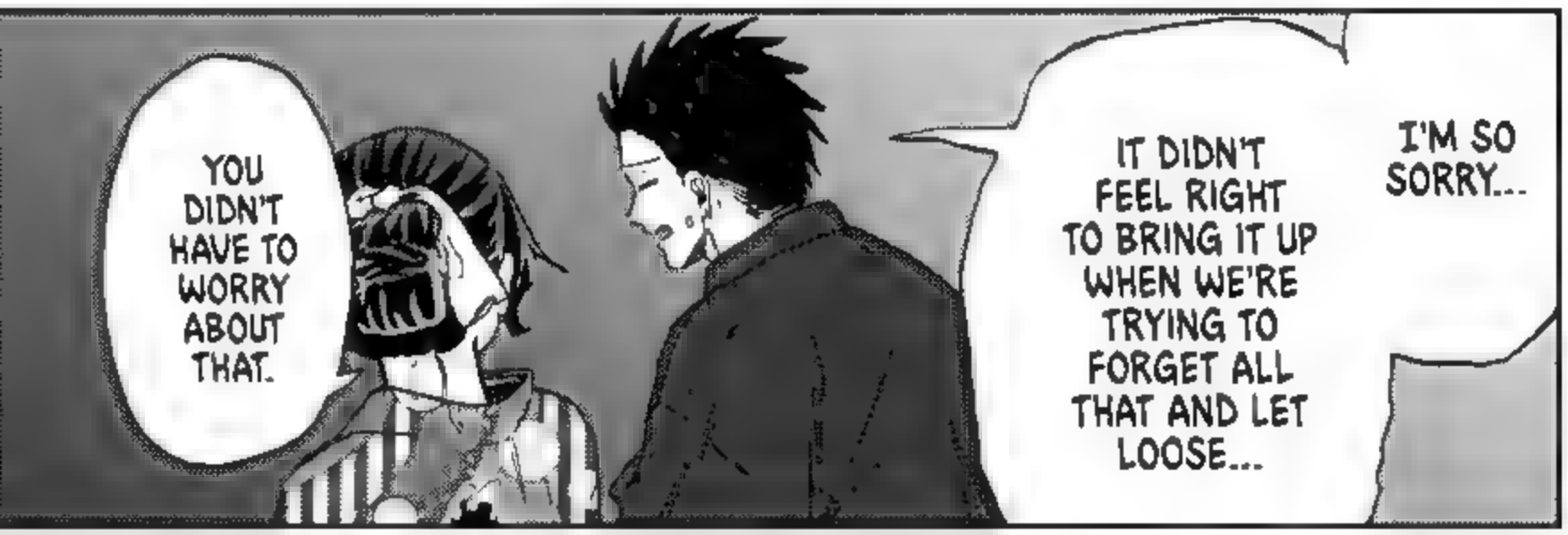
I WAS GONNA TELL YOU TODAY...

TOK

...BUT I WAS JUST SO HAPPY...

...THAT I WANTED TO TELL YOU IN PERSON.




YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.
IT DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT TO BRING IT UP WHEN WE'RE TRYING TO FORGET ALL THAT AND LET LOOSE...
I'M SO SORRY...

THAT YOU THINK ABOUT IT EVEN DURING TIMES LIKE THIS, RIGHT?
AND... IT'S NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING...

...HOW SERIOUSLY YOU'VE BEEN GRAPPLING WITH IT.

THAT JUST SHOWS...

...EVEN WHILE WE HAVE FUN TOGETHER.

I'D LIKE FOR US TO HAVE THESE SERIOUS CONVERSA-TIONS...

SO, WHEN WE GET TOGETHER LIKE THIS...

...

TELLING MYSELF TO KEEP TRYING HARD.

...AND FEED OFF IT...

I CAN THINK BACK TO THIS TIME...

THEN WHEN THINGS GET ROUGH...

IT'LL BECOME MY STRENGTH FROM HERE ON OUT...

JUST LIKE IT IS NOW.

IT CHEERED ME UP AND MOTIVATED ME EVEN MORE BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME DIRECTLY.

AND SO, WHAT YOU JUST TOLD ME...

YOU'RE REALLY AMAZING!

AND CONGRA-TULA-TIONS!

I REALLY CAN'T LET UP OR YOU'LL LEAVE ME IN THE DUST!

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU!

GRIP

WMP
WMP
Geez!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THAT FAR.

THEN WE COULD'VE CELEBRATED IT TODAY!

BUT I STILL WISH YOU'D TOLD ME SOONER!

ACTUALLY, WE MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO.

...AH.

...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

C'MON, GET UP!

WE'RE RIGHT ON TIME!

STAND

?

THERE'S SOMEWHERE I'D LIKE TO GO!

...HUH?